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No. 4

TORONTO, ONT.

SUMMER, 1951



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CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 14

No. 4 — Summer, 1951

Published by
THE CANADIAN AUTHORS ASSOCIATION

Canadian Poetry Magazine

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Until further notice, no poetry contests will be sponsored by this Magazine. Patrons of poetry are reminded that we pay for all poems printed, and are grateful for donations to defray the expense of this policy.

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CANADIAN POETRY MAGAZINE



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EDITOR - - - - - ARTHUR S. BOURINOT
P.O. Box 803, Postal Station B, Ottawa, Ontario

ASSOCIATE EDITOR - - - - - CHARLES BRUCE
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
Dr. J. Markowitz, M.B.E., J. Smyth Carter, A. B. Bennett
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"To write not to be understood is no less vaine than to speak
not to be heard. Fooles and Madmen use to talk to them-
selves in Publique, and he that publishes that which he would
have no Man understand but himself do's the same thing."

SAMUEL BUTLER

WIND ON THE SNOW

Wind sweeps the thin crust of the snow
With a sound like the tearing of silk.
I listen to wind ripping the silk of the snow,
I hear the voices that hide in the crypt of the night,
Crying the unuttered secrets of ice-locked earth.
O thin wind,
Under you shadows are blue and winged on the snow,
Armoured with snow are the strong fields, guarded and still,
Locking their passion of living in great dark loins.
O long wind,
There is a cry from the earth tonight,
Muffled and deep; and then from the silence the thin
Rip of the silk, the bite of the wind on the snow.

Kathleen Earle

Two Poems from South Africa

by Hilda Bernstein

SHANTYTOWN

High on the veld, upon that plain
And far from streets and lights and cars
And bare of trees and bare of grass
Jabavu sleeps beneath the stars.

Jabavu sleeps.
The children cough.
Cold creeps up, the hard night cold,
The earth is tight within its grasp,
The highveld cold without soft rain
Dry as the sand, rough as a rasp.
The frost-rimmed night invades the shacks.
Through dusty ground
Through rocky ground
Through freezing ground the night cold creeps.
In cotton blankets, rags and sacks
Beneath the stars Jabavu sleeps.

And sometimes when the traffic stills
The city sleepers stir to hear
The sharp crisp frost, the winter sound.
And feel the press of unknown fear
Through rock that joins beneath the ground.
They wake. They listen. Slow cold creeps
Through strong-walled houses, warm and bright.
The night, the veld, the shacks seem near.
But they are far. Jabavu sleeps.
Jabavu sleeps. The stars are bright.

Hilda Bernstein

AT THIS TIME, IN THIS PLACE

Evening. How quiet with the children sleeping.
My needle whispers, whispers as the thread
Curves swiftly through the contours of the cloth
Its rhythm pulsing smoothly in my head.

Evening. The house enfolds with four-walled silence.
The garden still beneath its wash of moon.
The earth relaxed, the sun-drained flowers reviving
While soft-furred moths brush vaguely round the room.

The night is woven firmly as my fabric
Of fine-drawn threads, of patterns dark and bright
And stitched with shining streets of silk and cotton,
With concrete shadows and with brittle light.

I hear Berea, a runner in the twilight.
The flats defy the darkness and they rise
In restless and illuminated splendour
Their windows rising blindly to the skies.

The streets sweep downwards to the eager centre
Where neon signs and car lights jump and shout
As if they are afraid of creeping shadows
And want to keep the night and quiet out.

But where the screech of city turns to whispers
Loom shifty giants, mine dumps in a flock.
Their hunch-backs white, eroded in the moonlight
Remembering the hardness of the rock.

The city fades; the stitches lose their straightness.
The streets return to paths; the paths run white
And creep beneath the secret grass, retreating
Concealed in deepening crevices of night.

Then like an echo of the town repeating
A weaker pattern, mist-remote and deep,
Orlando in its thousand-candled stillness
Slips into heavy and exhausted sleep.

And farther still, Moroka in the moonlight
The city's overflow flung far and high
The sad forgotten drift of shacks and shanties
Piled in disorder near the glowing sky.

* * * *

High, high and thin my evening-dreaming city
Life rings so clearly near the singing sky
Night rests so gently on the soaring buildings,
So lightly breathes where slums and shanties lie.

The house is still. The children sleep. My needle
Still curves and dips, the stitches twist and wind.
So deeply that I feel its very breathing
The city sews its silence in my mind.

Hilda Bernstein

THE SEA-DWELLERS

Have you not seen them rising from the waves
at midnight, when the gulls are silent and
the sea opens its doors and watery graves;
have you not seen them swirling on the sand
like corybants, their white malignant thighs
whispering from the mirrors of the moon;
whose phosphorescent eyes are never eyes
but knives to turn the flesh and strip the bone?

Or even at noontide when the sun lends
your otherwise grey a gay and yellow light,
have you not felt the twitching of their hands
upon your shoulder, footprints on your heart?

Whatever tides are swung, have you not heard
their voices bubbling through the surfaced word?

Howard Sergeant

THE INLAND SEA

Here and near as the hands of the sea
where the sea holds the land
till the climbing dark and all time are dying,
where the walls are down, and the sand
is a building-ground for the flair
of a poet or lover, or the boy highflying,
and the dunes of the heart are free,
is the country we know. Wholly days and night
are trapped in the sea's green hair
and this half-darkness here is half our light.

Fair and far from the prayers of the blind
and their wives who'd have you sleep
safe and sound in the boisterous shires of land
and surf, is the country we keep
reclaimed in the bay of the mind,
where the smooth white gulls rise over the sand
and the nodding heads of the blind.
Walk firmly that shore, whatever the wise ones
devise for your footsteps, and find
in yourself the unknown, the only horizons.

Howard Sergeant

GRIEF IN THE HEART

Grey cruisers of cloud patrol the sky.
The wind sobs in the tall grass.
Dread beach-heads in the mind.
Grief sobs in the heart.

Once more the fierce oratory of planes,
The blood-smeared earth,
The broken wings of youth.

Lucia Trent

ETUDE TRISTE

Loss is an empty nest where the wind is crying
Its poignancy again and yet again.
Loneliness is a bird forever flying
Above a barren plain.

Lucia Trent

ART COLONY

(Seen through sun-glasses)

There is no turning on the one-lane street
For the tourist cavalcade.
Their constant cameras aim for the bizarre,
Short-circuiting the rhythm in the air.
The shutters blink and snare a turbanned head,
A handle-bar mustache, a palette knife,
An apache in a smock, a violin
Clutched like a crying child beneath a chin.
The levelled lenses faithfully preserve
The weathered BARN where Broadway shows were born,
A Spanish grandee cutting silhouettes,
Al fresco porticoes, the little bars
Where men in velvet coats and Van Dykes vie
With beardless youths who use E. E. Cummings i—
Catching the glint they let the gold go by
Unnoticed as the atoms in the dust . . .
Art runs a rainbow ribbon in and out
Of shacklike studios where work is play
And golden hours pennies in the palm—
Where life flows like a freshet in the spring
And every bypath hides a fount of youth—
But there's no turning on the one-lane street . . .
A STAR appears—disguised in dungarees!
The kodaks click. The caravan moves on.

Amabel King

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY FOOTNOTE

Here was a man who got his name in the history books.
Biographers traced his steps along a river,
Followed him into the north like shadows,
Lived his life with a brief vicarious shiver.

They held him up for a model, a great explorer,
Uniting the shrinking globe to peanut size . . .
But never once looked into his intimate thinking
To search for truth—the truth that crucifies.

Perhaps it doesn't do to become familiar
With greatness, breathing deep in the human mind;
Obstacles waiting like pins in a bowling alley,
Success a matter of never looking behind.

The things he did—they would have been done by others,
But I would have given my life to stand
When he wrote his name on the side of a rock formation:
Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land.

Alfred W. Purdy

MOERAE—1951

Clotho at her spinning
Slowly shakes her head
Trying to unravel
Tangled golden thread.

Lachesis who measures,
Hums a strange wild song
Marks her shining patterns
Short instead of long.

Atropos, uncertain
Hearing battle din,
Takes her shears and quavers
"Where shall I begin?"

Lynette (Calgary)

THE ARK REFLOATED

We dragged the old hulk off the mountain mud
And felt the lift, and heard the plunging hiss
Beneath her timbers. Noah's antic flood
Was just a good high tide compared to this.

There's no fixed beacon on the course we set;
The slow knots quiver on the whirling log.
And nothing sighted. Nothing sighted yet—
But drifting sky, and tilted sea . . . and fog.

We've run the menace of the northern sleet,
The tropic thunder and the following sharks;
(And crossed the sunken latitudes of Crete
With a West Indian parrot quoting Marx.)

We've nursed a ewe (and kicked a yelping cur)
From Everest to the shoals of drowning Spain,
With senses twitching—to the smell of fur,
And creaking stays, and ice, and pouring rain . . .

The grey ship travels in a moving gloom,
The whole wild outfit wet and sick and cold—
The pythons hunched along the swinging boom;
The lions slavered in the leaking hold.

Only the dumb old camel, grim and grey,
Wet with the drippings of the morbid sky,
Preserves against the dust of flying spray
A fearless wisdom in his baleful eye.

The old bell-wether of the draggled flock—
Sneering alike at sea and vacant shore,
He squints and grumbles, tough as desert rock;
Remembering: he's been through it all before.

Charles Bruce

THE ATOMIC BOMB

This fabulous roc
Is feathered with
Secrets, and spawned
From primal myth.

It battens on riddles—
This mystic brood;
It fares on formulas
For its food.

With terrible ardor,
This strange creation
Quickly can hatch
Annihilation.

Louis Ginsberg

HUNGER

I have been surfeited with sweets in my day
And I have been hungry.
I can remember the hunger,
I can remember all of the hungers
For I have had them all.

.

Have you walked alone past shop windows
when the very sight of food brought tears to your eyes?
I was there too, looking over your shoulder.
Did you wander past houses at evening
Drinking with your eyes the warmth
The sight of happy people gathering for food?
I was close enough to have touched your hand—
Ah, we might have joined hands you and I,
We might have joined hands, all of us
All over the world
The people with empty stomachs.

I have been empty-hearted too
watching plump matrons
Hurrying home from an afternoon movie
With an extra loaf of bread and something quick for dessert.
I watched them and wandered back to an empty room—
Were you there too, in another empty room?
I have listened beneath the walls of churches
Waiting to hear the music summon me.
I have crawled inside, quiet as a grey cat,
Unnoticed. God-hungry
I licked with my eyes the flames of tall tapers
Before an altar.
(With linked arms we might have found our heaven,
Those of us who were strangers there.
Apart from the smug, the chosen, the satisfied,
Born of a new spirit, together we might have gone forth.)
I know you now, my brother
Take my hand.
We will find the promised land together.

Merle Alles

EDNA ST. VINCENT MILLAY

She was a candle in the night
That burned with such a lovely light;
She was a flower, tall and blue,
That whispered all Earth ever knew;
A wandering breeze that fanned the embers
Of fires the heart no more remembers.
Glad that grief and joy are over,
Quiet is the worn-out rover:
Flame, and flower, and wild wind's laugh
Transmuted to an epitaph.

Elizabeth Garbutt

OUTCAST

Very well, call me in out of the darkness
And draw your curtains primly
Against the lanky posturing
Of shifting lights.

The door is closed against the rain
And I move forward a little
Toward the circle of firelight
Where you bask and smile—

But your gesture of welcome falls short of the shadows

I am in the shadows, waiting.
There is a tug on the chain on my ankle
and the dark night summons me back to the crooked street.
You fool—will you never see?
Will you never reach out and touch me?

I am lost in the shadows
And you will not step from the circle of light.

Merle Alles

KU-THA*

(Indian Lament)

What shall I do? how shall I go on?
Where shall I travel now you are gone?
Tears will not come, and the tepee is cold
Why did you leave me now I am old?

Ku-tha come back! the dawn will be slow
How shall I travel? where shall I go?
Grief is a lash and my heart is a stone
Ku-tha . . . I call you . . . I am alone.

Lynette (Calgary)

*Ku-tha is a term of endearment used only in grief for a wife, and never uttered to the living.

THE WHITE BIRDS

Take the train to Nowhere . . .
You took it once;
The ticket read—To be announced;
But you went aboard!

No luggage—
Just a song;
And a curious haunting
of the far places!

Where did the train go?
Does it matter?
It was bound for four places
In the country of Nowhere—

The hills hid the mines
But the white birds were winging!

And the scarlet berry
Was broken on the bush . . .
Would you go again?
I wonder!

The white birds have not singing!

Ruth Cleaves Hazelton

A TRIOLET FOR EASTER

Where shadows have lain
How bright glow the daffodils!
Christ conquered death's pain.
Where shadows have lain
His kingdom shall reign.
The red rose her perfume spills.
Where shadows have lain
How bright glow the daffodils!

Constance Barbour Holbein

JOE BARR

Old Joe Barr . . .
With his coat tails stained with tar.
His Sunday suit as loud as bells
That ring in certain merrier hells;
His grin for guying girls and boys
That were themselves his living toys;
The laughter and the stories told,
The bluster and the ringing gold
Of belly-laughter, rich and deep,
That rescued urchins out of sleep.

Old Joe Barr . . .
I wonder where and how you are.
Reeling down a since-paved road,
And someone prodding with a goad.
He bowed to wives and merchant-men;
They, condescending, bowed again.
Soon fast asleep beneath blue sky.
A job? Why that's the way to die.
While others worked and played and hid,
He said, "I'll sleep," and so he did.

If you should venture far away
And not come back until next day
From cultured Greece and classic Rome,
He was the signpost—you were home.
And his vast, grinning, simple face
Made home a real and friendly place.
But I grew older, went to school,
And Joe was just an idle fool.

But now I am not quite so sure
Of anything, as Joe was sure
Because his heart was pure.
If you remember Joe
In dusty streets and snow,

Or if he had a twin
In other town, blood-kin
To old immortal Joe,
(For who can tell)
Then you and I
Can smile and sigh,
And say,
"Sleep well,"
To old Joe Barr.

Alfred W. Purdy

TRADING POST

Joe Friday with his pungent Indian musk
Composed of fresh pine needles, dogs and sweat,
Warily circling the trade goods counter,
Fingering his rifle like an amulet

To ward off hunger, sickness, and the bitter cold
Of tall Mackenzie stars and wolves' thin cries;
His certainties are all inside his corded arms,
His variables are wind and weather, flesh that dies.

I am reminded of the cougar's velvet grace
Uncoiling through the trees and one with night;
The eagle unobserved beyond the camera's reach,
The Dogrib savage who never learned to write.

He has no happiness but something similar
To take its place through momentary doubt,
A look within his eyes when rivers break themselves
To pieces and the silver ice goes out.

Joe Friday with his sombre Indian face,
The shelves of shining toys, the shirts in red and blue . . .
The white man's chatter trails away and dies,
And something of his own vitality breaks through.

Alfred W. Purdy

DRUMMERS

Oh glad bird, mad bird, oh cocky little strutter,
Pray what has made you brave and bold and set your heart
a-flutter?
And what has told you winter's gone and dreary summer coming?
What make you hop on hollow logs and start your drum-drum-
drumming

In the spring?

Oh gay bird, May bird, oh daring little fellow,
And are you dreaming of a mate and fuzz-balls soft and yellow?
And can it be that such a hope protection instinct's numbing
What makes you hop on hollow log sand start your drum-drum-
drumming

In the spring?

Oh waiting bird for mating bird the earth thrills to your passion,
While thundering your urgent plea in spring-time partridge
fashion.
Some vital force—was it your call?—has set the earth a-humming;
Now winter past and warmth at last, we hail your drum-drum-
drumming

In the spring!

E. A. Gardiner

PORTRAITS IN BLACK AND WHITE

A placid, wimpled nun,
Erect in a carved chair,
Feels a playful tugging of her black robes.

Her little counterpart,
Black fur with snowy collar,
Gently purrs her request for the broad lap.

Belle Chapman Morrill

SHADOWED

Galvanized like some gigantic frog,
A wriggling, ectoplasmic polliwog,
As jubilant as a severed Siamese twin,
My rippling shadow swims, translucent thin,
Flame-flickering, submarine and sombre,
A fathom deep in the lake's warm limpid amber.

Sweeping swiftly, dark as a devilfish
Below me, its wimpling mantle shatters
In splashing sandy shallows as I dash
To shore, laughing off my fancied terrors,
Glad to escape to sunshine bright and sweet
With a docile shadow shackled to my feet.

Fred Swayze

MONTREAL

A Giant
has walked over this rocky ground,
scuffing hollows with his heels
and scattering silver dimes to the wind.

Blue City,
cardboard houses spread like mushrooms
around the peak.

Someone
played at dams when the tide ran out,
sitting in his five pools and making mud-piles,
then left it to the wind and the rain.

Close-up
of iron balconies, curling wooden stairs
up frescoed facades.

Brian H. Taylor

GRIEF AND THE GREEN

One heart shall be aware
Of the tower of the mountain.
One darkness shall be shaken
By the lithe green of the trees;
For although the springing water
Has been taken from the fountain,
There are still these.

Two sad eyes shall be wakened
To the winging of the swallow.
Understanding shall be kindled
In one face by strange degrees;
For although the little loved pool
Has been taken from the hollow,
Still there are these.

One dark soul shall be lighted
By the planet in the far west.
There hunger shall be ended
By the moonlight on the hill.
For although away from one life
Much was taken that was fairest,
There is much still.

Barbara Day

SHAPES OF ESCAPE

Dawn licks the bones of a driftwood snarl,
Warms the dream of an ancient shell,
Gulls swerve in an old ballet,
Film-grey as beach—or ashes.

Over the water, sunlight on a shroud,
Mist is puffs of dust, breath blown,
Out of the mist a foghorn starts to mourn
And virgin ripples curve into a fist.

Lillian Mitchell

OLD HOMESTEAD

I know a spot where silk-spun clouds are hung
Between horizon poplars on a hill
That tumbles down a meadow, to a rill
Of riot sun and shadow. Adder's tongue
Hepaticas and trilliums long have clung
To this select seclusion. And a mill-
Wheel waits and waits . . . No more the waters fill
The flume—their laughter to the valley flung.

Yet, here I'd hum among the drowsing bees
And dream their honeyed thoughts. The clover leans
A little where my cudding Ayrshires lay—
Where one huge elm down-bends to touch its knees.
The zigzag grace of cedar rails here means
That pioneers are still with me to stay.

J. R. G. Adams

THE POLITE VISITORS

When we had learned that he could not get well,
Our visits showed more deference than before;
And many were the times we'd hear him tell
Of that one day when he was something more
Than he had been—some little hour of glory;
A single splendid instant in the sweep
And flow of time. And stumbling through his story,
Quite often we would see him fall asleep,
Continuing it, perhaps, within his dreams.
The more he told about this sweet success—
There were even crowds that cheered, it seems—
I am ashamed to say we listened less;
For now that death has closed each drowsy lid,
We can't remember what it was he did.

Charles E. Ross

WIND

I whispered down the chimney,
Across the dying fire;
I saw within the darkness
The girl in black attire.

She turned to face me slowly;
She knew the sound of death,
For in the chimney's sighing
She heard her lover's breath.

She shivered at my touching,
She clasped her hands in grief;
I brought the sorrow closer:
The tears that grant relief.

Louise Plumb

GARDEN

I can remember
The sun flowing into
The golden goblets
Of crocus.

And sword thrusts made
By iris blades
Dripping with crystal blood
Of quickened earth.

I can remember
The spring tight tendrils
Grasping with new green reach
The grape arbor.

I must remember
The heavy-breasted purple
The pendulous dusty lust
Of grapes.

Lillian Mitchell

END OF SUMMER

(After a painting by Fletcher Martin)

How long ago was June?
When circus posters gaily bloomed
on weathered barns. Remember?
After that came haying time
and berry festivals;
then summer visitors
when all our gardens offered feasts
of sugar peas, slim carrots, corn, and beets.
There were the driftwood fires
on the beach for clambakes;
starlit swims in silken-smooth warm tides.
Then came the harvesting of wheat
while every kitchen flooded out-of-doors
with spicy sweetness of the cooking green tomato chow.
The last plump blueberries were found;
goldenrod and purple asters blazed
along the lanes; the caraway and sage
were almost at the picking stage.
Then, nights, the Northern Lights
began to dance above the hills;
and birch logs burning on the hearth
drew us closer to each other's company.
Still, no one spoke of summer's passing,
as if, by planned indifference to signs,
the season would not change.

Today I knew that summer's end had come.
The faded tatters of a circus poster
fluttered in a breeze; and, lightly as a gull
on outspread wings, two golden beech leaves
drifted past the reds and blues
of torn dulled print.
Today I knew that summer's end had come.

Ellen Fulton

Twenty-three

WHERE GOLD OCCURS

The geologist is a diffident man.
"Greenstone volcanics", he points to the map
Of Atlin, "where gold is found":
So making poetry of words science devised.
The slides shiver and straighten in the projector.
The monitors force twin rainbows of water
Against the placer bed, into the yawning sluice;
Where the gravel hurdles the riffles,
The tailings vanish in spray,
And the residue is gold.
Vivid pictures appear and disappear:
White tents, red-roofed buildings, mine workings:
First the bright twirled pans, then rockers,
Now the monitors with their riffled sluice;
And booted, arrogant miners striding across the screen.
But the geologist strode first—past Surprise Lake,
Skirting the mountains and glaciers,
Forests of Spruce and Pine naming the turbulent creeks;
Heat and black flies' bite in the hurried summer,
Cold and snow warning of winter's approach.
Then see, here on the map's face, greenstone volcanics,
And the cry of "Gold, gold!" reanimates restless men.
The geologist returns to his quartz:
"Zircon, scheelite, iron oxide may occur with gold".

M. Eugenie Perry

THE POET SPEAKS

Breathless, I guard my thought against a world
That shouts to be let in; how can it know
That out of the hoarded stones of joy and grief,
Here in this room hushed by the falling snow
I build a tower that leans but will not topple,
Unless it is levelled by the hands of people
Alien to silence; hands that tear apart
With one swift touch the white tower of the heart?

Pauline Havard

Book Reviews

OF TIME AND THE LOVER—James Wreford—McClelland & Stewart—92 pp., \$2.75.

MOMENT OF VISITATION—Gustav Davidson—Allan Swallow—47 pp., \$2.50.

THE IRON HARVEST—Geoffrey Johnson—Williams & Norgate—46 pp., 6s.

WHAT MATTER WHAT WAY—Lilian Fount—"Le Droit"—Ottawa—36 pp., No Price.

DOMINANT SEVENTH—Phillips Kloss—The Caxton Printers—139 pp., \$3.00.

The poetry of James Wreford moves between the poles of personal soliloquy, religious faith and human love. These are not arbitrary divisions or fixed boundaries, (few poets would admit anything so confining as a boundary) but in a general way the above themes dominate the entire volume.

The philosophic and introspective poems on which the author's reputation is undoubtedly based are the least attractive for me. They deal with the world's ills and their effect on the individual. However, obscurity clouds a good part of this verse, though I will be the first to admit that the roots of obscurity can often be traced back to the reader himself. Mr. Wreford is impressive in his phraseology and symbol; his images are memorable, his technique faultless. Curiously enough, some of the verse forms of this modern Canadian resemble those of A. E. Housman, one of the most popular of the traditionalists. The love poems break free from the fetters of the mind, but without once losing intellectual sting or X-ray insight. They are not so conscious of an audience: they are written for sheer joy of writing, and for that reason they leave the earth and soar. The lyric touch is never completely absent, the perception of beauty that is a vital part of poetry. A chipped and scarred floor would be ugly for some people but others would find a pattern that might be developed into poetry.

This is one of Mr. Wreford's patterns:

"Larksong when no larks are there
into the air ascends
to thrill the heavy hearted
and make a brief amends
for winter and the welter
of all our doubtful ends.
And so this sodden evening
shall in the realms of mind
call up the sheaves of harvest
the swarthy workers bind
in rays of level twilight
on sunnier days and kind.
And larks spring from the meadow
into the mental air
setting the heavens ringing
that would with cloud and care
hang on the hill, yet cannot
quiet within the ear
the larks still singing there."

James Wreford is a happy blend of lyric poet and clear-thinking intellectual. Even his undistinguished work could not be called mediocre, and his best assures him a unique and individual place in Canadian poetry.

Gustav Davidson has won many prizes and claimed many honors, and his latest book provides a number of very good reasons why this should be so. His poems are clear, incisive, and economical with words. Most of them are short, and the reader is left with the wish that the thought be pursued—but if it were the magic would certainly be dispelled. The subjects are varied, and I think the only words used more than once are prepositions and pronouns. Pervading Mr. Davidson's work is the undertone of his music, swelling like an ocean and falling away like a woodland brook.

"This life I've loved so dearly
And grudgingly must leave—
Not for its pleasures merely
Do I grieve.
Not causes—joined, forsaken;
Nor loves—pledge or forsworn.
Only for roads untaken
Do I mourn."

He is an esteemed contributor to C.P.M. and Secretary of The Poetry Society of America.

English poets have the discreet knack of blending tradition and history with the present day. The names of classical and mythical figures become music entirely in keeping with circuses and kites. This may seem incongruous but I wish I knew how it was done. This subtle blending is commonplace in Geoffrey Johnson's poetry.

The linked and hyphenated lines of Hopkins are much in evidence but there is little of grotesquerie in Johnson's poems; he stays pretty close to conventional verse forms. Aside from that, however, he is a complete master of poetic diction, all the little tricks that come from experience, the sum-total of metrical craftsmanship.

According to the slip cover of the book English critics have labeled Johnson a nature poet. That is an arbitrary assessment. I think Geoffrey Johnson could write about any subject under the sun and make it new and exciting. Nature is touched very briefly, (perhaps in deference to overseas critics) childhood is illumined and brought back, the human portraits are sharply limned and accurately executed. Johnson's effectiveness does not derive from a new approach to his subject, but rather from his ability to include the reader in everything he writes. He is the little boy at a circus who watches a dark woman in the circus ring, who marvels when

colored pigeons fly from a basket and alight on her shoulders. And then he is sad:

"In the hollow night
I had learned by the merest accident
From a showman's laughter kindly meant
That the pigeons every month were dyed.
And then I cried, and then I cried!"

He places words in the mouth of a woodcarver:

"I carve this monument because I must,
Because I love it, and because I wish
Before I die to feel the thrill that comes
When what is wrestled with at last leaps clear
To match the vision leaping in the mind."

I think Johnson had other trades than woodcarving in mind when he wrote that poem. Mr. Johnson is a contributor to C.P.M. and is European Editor of The Poetry Chap Book, New York.

Lilian Found has authored a brisk little booklet of verse indicative of an enquiring turn of mind. Her work gives the impression of spontaneity, and is modern without being incomprehensible. I enjoyed "TO NO END GATHERED" a parody of James Joyce, the aforementioned Hopkins, and possibly others. Suzette is likened to Mercury:

"I hope no-one catches her
and pops her into a thermometer
to register his own temperament;
quicksilver should run free."

Mrs. Found certainly runs free—to the enjoyment of the reader.

DOMINANT SEVENTH is described as a novel-poem, but basically it is prose. There are many definitions of poetry and probably some of them could be broadened to include the contents of this book. However, viewed as prose, the story is interesting and ingenious. It deals with a composer and the agonies of musical composition. All characters gravitate moth-like around the flame of great music, and the events narrated seem merely incidental to that central theme. Communism is examined cursorily and cast aside, the principal argument being that it is the enemy of individualism. The Communist villainess is discarded by the hero and cast into the outer darkness of Mexico, whereat she promptly marries a redheaded Irish labor leader.

There is a short section of verse following "DOMINANT SEVENTH" that comes a bit closer to true poetry. It deals mainly with various Indian tribes of the south-west, their legends and customs.

The author's punctuation seems to be entirely of his own devising, and it is left to the reader to figure out exactly where he comes to a full stop. This may seem a trifling point but I found it annoying. Assuredly the comma was never so popular outside a grammar class.

Alfred W. Purdy

THE SASKATCHEWAN POETRY BOOK—The Saskatchewan Poetry Society, Regina—46 pp., 40 cent.

This fifteenth Year Book of a provincial poetry group contains the usual proportion of amateur and "newspaper" type verse, plus a few pieces of professional calibre.

I could wish that more of the forty-four contributors dealt specifically with local scenes, or more definitely conveyed the prairie "atmosphere". Hugh Duddridge exemplifies the best in this field with his "SEEN FROM MY SEEDER STEP" which begins:

"The long straight line of the wheel-mark,
The clink of the rolling chain,
And below me I see the ripple
Of the streamlets of dropping grain . . ."

Though one could spare the trite conclusion, such stanzas have color and substance.

For its lyricism, I like Margot Osborne's "MOONMIST". And Ella Davis' "LONDON" has distinctive quality.

THE TIGHT-ROPE WALKER—Norman Levine—The Totem Press, Limited, London (3600 Atwater Avenue, Montreal)—30 pp., \$1.75.

In both make-up and content, this is a somewhat "precious" little volume. For example, I can find neither artistic nor logical justification for the frontispiece.

Mr. Levine displays a sound sense of rhythm and rare skill in the use of imagery. These few pages abound in verses of such clear-cut beauty as:

"Come down
And sit in the dust
And we shall build our house as a moth
To catch the weight of the wind."

But whether they are inspired by deep poetic conviction, or merely scholarship and a taste for art, I am uncertain. If the former, I hope he soon emerges from the experimental stage and realizes poetry's demand for emotion as well as technical skill.

In the meanwhile, it is worth salvaging from surrealist settings such admirable bits as:

"He came as a child taking a journey,
High above the water, in the mist of darkness.
He separated the cliff and began to walk."

POEMS OF TRANSITION by Harold Page Palladium Press, London
66 pp., 7s. 6d.

These thirteen compositions contain hints of poetic ability, but they are so widely scattered as not to save a single piece from dullness. The dullness is due not only to the writer's lack of technical inventiveness, but to his absorption with vast and indefinite social themes such as industrial-commercial mechanization, war, and the perfidy of politicians.

"FULL EMPLOYMENT" illustrates both Mr. Page's errors and his potentialities. Its frothy incoherence is relieved by occasional patches of impressionistic word painting (as in the portrayal of the mechanized office-woman), but the final impression is that the writer is no more sure than the reader what he is talking about.

"THE ELEPHANT GOD" and "WAR POEM" just miss excellence the former, through Mr. Page's failure to exploit a valuable refrain; the latter, through a trite ending. Its naiveté would condemn the verse drama "RESISTANCE" even if it possessed poetic distinction which it does not.

Goodridge MacDonald

THE RENT THAT'S DUE TO LOVE Edited by Gwyn Williams Editions
Poetry London Ltd.—126 pp., 7s. 6d. net.

In his Forenote the editor of this anthology of Welsh poetry calls the choice of poems "a purely personal one"; but is this not true of all anthologies? He also believes Welsh poetry display "greater intimacy" with the land than does English poetry, but his selection does not prove this claim, the poems seeming to concern themselves with old age, death; or the purely physical aspect of love as suggested by the title lines:

"Thus she'll no more look up
the rent that's due to love."

The land seems only to function as a source of material gain, and with a woman supplying the labour, as suggested in "THE WISH":

"An ordered parish, moderate pay,
House under light hill, books in plenty,
With rows of cows in milking fold cared for
By Elin my wife, brisk, bright and kindly."

Twenty-nine

But at least in the above excerpt a woman is praised, a contrast to the attitude in "AGAINST WOMEN", a long and amusing poem in which one of the less vituperative passages runs thus:

"King David, for example,
who built the glorious temple,
and Samson, mighty carl,
were each yoked by a girl."

A reviewer unable to read classical Welsh—the originals are printed opposite the English forms—cannot decide how successful the editor has been in translation, and he himself admits that "The classical Welsh metres lose their dignity and beauty when attempted in English; but there are a number of charming short lyrics, notably "SONG", and "BREAK OF DAY"; and such flashes of poetic fervour as this quatrain on death:

"We will leave no greater trace
Than the snake does under the trees,
Or the vessel's watery furrow,
Or in thin air the swift arrow."

M. Eugenie Perry

SELECTED POEMS OF DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT. With a Memoir by E. K. Brown—Ryerson—176 pp., \$3.50.

Here is a book that fills a gap too long apparent in our literature. It is the only representative collection of Scott's work, since his "Collected Poems" have been out of print for some years. It is a book that every lover of poetry should possess, for in it is the quintessence of the spirit of a great man and a great soul. It opens with the first adequate Memoir of the poet written by E. K. Brown who, lamentably, did not live to see his accomplished work. Probably the best portrait study of Scott forms the frontispiece, done by Mr. M. O. Hammond. The selection of the verse was made by Mrs. Scott.

The Memoir is an excellent piece of work and is the first in the field giving as it does a more or less detailed account of Scott's personal life. It tells of his life in the Civil Service, his literary and musical interests, his marriages, the birth and untimely death of his only child, Elizabeth, which was to have such an impact on his life and work, and a chronological account of his literary output, and the manner of its reception by the public and the critics. The collection is a culling from three books, "The Circle of Affection," "The Green Cloister," and "Collected Poems" which latter work was published in 1927.

Thirty

In his Presidential address to The Royal Society of Canada in 1922, Dr. Scott took as his subject, "Poetry and Progress", since published in his last book, "The Circle of Affection", and now a landmark in Canadian criticism. In it he said, "There must ever be this contrast between the worker for instant results and the worker who toils for the last perfection. One class is not without honor, the other is precious beyond valuation." Scott, himself, was undoubtedly one who "toiled for the last perfection". He never wrote a careless line of poetry nor set down a poor sentence in prose. As he once remarked, "The little success I have achieved in life I owe to the fact that when I did anything I put my whole body and soul into it."

Andre Gide once wrote that "the poet's gift, is the gift of perpetual discovery," This was true of Scott. He was the first to set down and interpret in an adequate manner the life and spirit of the Canadian Indian. Through his work in the Department of Indian Affairs he gained an intimate knowledge that was to influence immeasurably his literary work. The forty lines of blank verse describing the death of Akoose in the poem, "Lines in Memory of Edmond Morris," are a high water mark in Scott's work, indeed they will stand comparison with similar work in any literature. Nothing finer has been done in poetry in Canada. Unfortunately space does not permit dealing with the poems individually and a few generalizations are all that are possible.

"See deep enough and you see musically", is a quotation from Carlyle that is particularly apt for music was Scott's first love and he only turned to poetry through his friendship with Lampman. His editing of his friend's works and his lifelong fostering of his poetic reputation denote a generosity of spirit that is only too seldom found in literary circles. The musical influence is very strongly evident in Scott's unusual rhythms and singing lyrics.

Ryerson Press is to be commended for publishing this excellent work and for the attractive format. One misses a list of Scott's works and a bibliography but one must not carp at a book that is so close to perfection. It is a privilege to review it.

Arthur S. Bourinot

Books Received

WHITE MAGIC AND OTHER POEMS—Henry Arthur Edwards—20 pp.—privately printed—50 cents.

STAR SHINE AND MOONLIGHT—Henry Arthur Edwards—20 pp.—privately printed—50 cents.

HARSHLY THE RAIN FELL—Peter North—12 pp.—privately printed.

THOUGHTS AND BY-GONE MEMORIES—Dorothy Martin Pecknold—34 pp.—privately printed.

FOOTNOTE TO THE LORD'S PRAYER AND OTHER POEMS—Kay Smith—First Statement Press, Montreal—36 pp., \$1.00.

THE VICTORIAN HOUSE AND OTHER POEMS—Philip Child—Ryerson—54 pp., \$2.25.

WITH THE BEAUTY OF THAT HOUR—Margaret H. Wilton—24 pp.—privately printed.

SEA SPRUNG—Vincent Ferrini—Drawings by Louis Evan—Cape Ann Press—47 pp., \$1.00.

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THE SELECTED POEMS OF DUNCAN CAMPBELL SCOTT

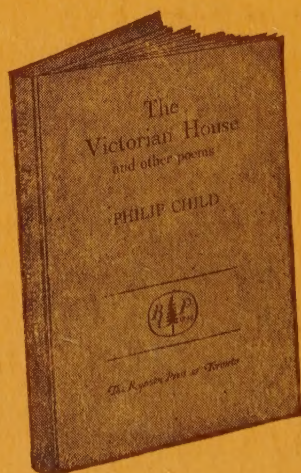
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